



## Nashville VBA Regional Office

### UTVA Report

December 2014

#### National Summary of Improved Service Provided to Veterans, their Families and Survivors by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

1. VBA's Veterans Service Center Claims Processing
  - a. Reduced backlog (any claim older than 125 days) from peak of **611,000** in March '13 to **239,000** – **61%** reduction in 20 months.
  - b. Reduced inventory from peak of **884,000** in July '12 to **525,000** – **41%** reduction
  - c. Without sacrificing quality: Increased claim-level accuracy from **83%** in June 2011 to **90%** today; at the issue-level, accuracy is **96%**
  - d. Met goal of completing a RECORD-BREAKING **1.32M claims** in Fiscal Year 2014; over **150K** more than Fiscal Year 2013, which was also a record-breaking **1.17M-claim** year!
  - e. Today Veterans with pending claims have been waiting, on average, **136 fewer days** for a decision on their claim compared to the peak in March of last year.
  - f. Dedicated non-rating workforce completed **2.7M non-rating end products** in Fiscal Year 2014 – the highest production of non-rating work in **20 years** – **50 percent** more non-rating claims than we did in Fiscal Year 2011.
  - g. More automation: **1 in 6** Veterans now submit online dependency requests and **more than half** of them receive payments in **less than one day**; also **automating 12K out of 65K (18%) of burial payments** upon notice of death since July 2014.
  - h. Appeal rates held steady amidst increased production—of **1.32M** completed claims in Fiscal Year 2014, **11-12%** (historical rate) appealed, **4-5%** reached the Board of Veterans Appeals, and **1.2%** decided in Veteran's favor, often based on additional evidence.
  - i. Reduced Veterans Pension inventory by **67%** from peak of **36K to 12K**, backlog by **95%** from peak of **14.5K to 690**; reduced Survivors' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation claims inventory by **60%** from peak of **19K to 7.6K**, backlog by **87%** from peak of **8.7K to 1K**; and improved DIC timeliness by **100 days** from peak of **168 to 68 days** while maintaining **99%** accuracy.
  - j. Transformed into electronic operations – went from touching **5,000 tons of paper annually** (200 Empire State Buildings stacked end-to-end) to processing nearly **94% of disability claims electronically**, with **491K claims** in electronic inventory – only **34K** in paper, completed **2.3M** rating decisions and just surpassed **1 million** claims completed in the Veteran Benefits Management System (VBMS)
  - k. Enabling Veterans to file claims online through eBenefits – over **4M** registered users, **62M** contacts with Veterans in Fiscal Year 2014 (**86%** online) vs. **9M** contacts (majority by phone) in 2009.
  - l. Expediting Veterans claims: **41%** of receipts from VSOs in Quarter 1 in Fiscal Year 2015 are Fully Developed Claims, up from **3%** at initiative start in 2012; received nearly **2.5M** Disability Benefits Questionnaires in Fiscal Year 2014 from VHA – VHA clinicians co-located in regional offices contributed to this record number
2. VBA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment
  - a. More than **93K** Veterans received over **\$1.01B** in Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) benefits in Fiscal Year 2014
3. VBA's Loan Guaranty
  - a. Guaranteeing almost **2.1M** home loans; guaranteed almost **440K** loans in Fiscal Year 2014 totaling **\$100B** and helped **80K** Veterans avoid foreclosure, while maintaining the lowest foreclosure rate (**1.56%**) in the industry for **25 consecutive quarters**.
4. VBA's Education
  - a. Provided more than **\$47B** in benefits to send more than **1.3 million** Veterans and dependents to school through the Post-9/11 GI Bill
  - b. Processing majority of Post-9/11 GI Bill claims in an **average of 6 days at 99% accuracy**
5. VBA's Insurance
  - a. Currently paying all insurance claims in an average of **3 days at 100% accuracy**

#### Nashville Regional Office Staffing and Hiring Update

1. The Nashville Regional Office welcomed Michael Casey as the Support Services Division Chief in October.
2. Temporary Veterans Service Representatives hired to assist with non-rating claims/adjustments workload. Nashville was one of six stations nationally to receive the temporary hiring authority.

3. Currently recruiting for Legal Administrative Specialists in the Nashville Call Center. The Nashville Regional Office is staffed at 481 full-time equivalents and 7 temporary hires.
4. The Nashville Regional Office is staffed at 481 full-time equivalents and 7 temporary hires. The Nashville Regional Office workforce is currently comprised of 60% Veteran employees.

#### Summary of Service Provided by the Nashville Regional Office Veterans Service Center (VSC)

1. Claims Completion for Fiscal Year 2014 (October through September)
  - a. Completed 36,454 disability rating claims (**16.9% ahead of last FY**)
  - b. Completed 13,871 non-rating claims/adjustments (**10% ahead of last FY**)
  - c. Achieved an accuracy rate of **91%** (3 month issue-based) and **92.5%** (12 month claim-based) for disability rating claims
  - d. Fully Developed Claims (FDC)
    - i. Completed **9,528** FDC Claims (over twice as many as Fiscal Year 2013)
    - ii. Average Days to Complete (ADC) is **169.9 Days**, over 125 days sooner than traditional claims.
    - iii. Average Days Pending (ADP) is **105.6 Days**
2. Reduced the total appeals inventory from a high of 6,641 to 5,427 (18% decrease) as of the end of September.

#### Summary of Service Provided by the Nashville Regional Office Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Division

1. Rehabilitation Services Fiscal Year 2014
  - a. Assisted **169 Veterans** in obtaining suitable employment
  - b. Processed **337 IDES** applications
  - c. Processed **1698 Chapter 31** applications
  - d. Processed **2,888 Entitlement Determinations**
2. Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  - a. Served approximately **3,400 VR&E** participants
  - b. Provides greater access to Veterans throughout the state of Tennessee through offices in Nashville, Memphis, Clarksville, Ft. Campbell and Knoxville
3. VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC)
  - a. Serves approximately **180 students a month** between Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and Austin Peay State University (APSU).
  - b. Provide a range of services to include tutoring, benefit information and vocational guidance to all service members, Veterans, and eligible dependent students on campus.
  - c. Each VSOC location has an active mentoring program where Veteran students provide information and guidance to these students. The VA Work Study program is utilized to compensate these mentors for their time and assistance.
  - d. MTSU has been in operation for 2 years and the MTSU VSOC Counselor recently was recognized as the VR&E Service Employee of the Year in the VSOC division.
  - e. APSU celebrated its one year anniversary in October.
4. IDES Program
  - a. In July 2014, the VR&E Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) program expanded to nine IDES VRCs with seven counselors located at Ft. Campbell, KY and two at the nearby Clarksville VR&E Office.
  - b. The VR&E IDES program is currently serving approximately **600 Servicemembers**.
  - c. Completing development of claims in **2 days**.
  - d. Fourth highest average monthly caseload of IDES Army sites, with **115 cases per month**.
  - e. Second highest installation-level satisfaction with a weighted overall satisfaction percentage of **91%**.
  - f. Seventh Highest total number of cases processed since IDES inception.
  - g. The VRCs are actively involved in providing IDES briefings at the Medical Evaluation Board briefings in addition to biweekly briefings provided to the Warrior Transition Unit. The VR&E IDES program at Ft. Campbell also offers a walk-in service for service members seeking more information about VR&E. Ft. Campbell and the service members are very excited to have VR&E on post to assist with their transition.

#### Nashville Call Center (NCC)

1. For Fiscal Year 2014 the Nashville Call Center has answered **641,863 calls**.
2. FYTD the wait time for all VA Call Centers nationally is **6 minutes and 27 seconds**.
3. Veteran Service Organization (VSO) 800 Number Pilot
  - a. The Nashville Call Center has sole responsibility for providing assistance through a toll free line to our VSO partners across the nation and has 19 PCRs dedicated to providing expeditious service to our VSO partners.

- b. The VSO pilot line has been operational since May 13, 2013. Agents have answered over **123,117 calls** with a wait time of approximately **2:57 minutes with no blocked calls**.
- 4. VSO/ Stakeholder Enterprise Portal (SEP) Live Chat and Co-Browse Pilot & eBenefits
  - a. The Nashville Call Center is using the VSO designated line for the National Call Center Chat Pilot. The pilot began on September 15, 2014. Phase One of the pilot is addressing general questions. There have been **142 Chats** with an average wait time of **1:09 minutes** and a Chat duration of **19:08 minutes**. Phase two of the pilot will begin in January 2015 and will focus on PII/personal benefit information.
  - b. The Nashville Call Center has increased its eBenefits Remote Proofing agents to 10 PCR's, to assist Veterans with their premium level access to eBenefits, which allows them to self-service items to include check status of claim, status of payment, and generate benefit letter.
- 5. The Nashville Call Center is in the process of recruiting new agents, all of those are anticipated to be Veterans.

## Events

- 1. Small Business Administration Annual Veterans Appreciation Day
  - a. In September, staff participated in the Small Business Administration Veterans Appreciation Day in Johnson City, Tennessee.
- 2. Memphis Operation Stand Down/Project Connect Program
  - a. In September, staff participated in the Operation Stand Down/Project Connect event in Memphis, Tennessee and provided outreach assistance to homeless Veterans.
- 3. Memphis VA Medical Center Town Hall Meeting
  - a. On September 18, 2014, the Nashville Regional Office participated in the Memphis VA Medical Center Town Hall meeting for Veterans, stakeholders, news media, and the general public. The event was hosted by the Memphis VAMC Director. Ms. MacDonald answered VBA related questions from the audience. After the Town Hall, Veterans were invited to speak with counselors regarding their claim or sign up for eBenefits.
- 4. Ex-POW/MIA Recognition Day
  - a. On September 19, 2014, staff participated in an Ex-POW/MIA Recognition Day in Smyrna, Tennessee and answered general VBA benefit questions.
- 5. Nashville VA Medical Center Town Hall Meeting
  - a. On September 22, 2014, the Nashville Regional Office participated in the Nashville VA Medical Center Town Hall meeting for Veterans, stakeholders, news media, and the general public. The event was hosted by the Nashville VAMC Director. Ms. MacDonald answered VBA related questions from the audience. After the Town Hall, Veterans were invited to speak with counselors regarding their claim or sign up for eBenefits.
- 6. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) visit to Austin Peay State University
  - a. On September 23, 2014, the SVAC visited Austin Peay State University to tour the VetSuccess on Campus and VA Work-study programs.
- 7. Fort Campbell Retiree Appreciation Day
  - a. On September 27, 2014, staff participated in a Fort Campbell Retiree Appreciation Day in Fort Campbell, Tennessee and answered general VBA benefit questions.
- 8. Austin Peay State University (APSU) Ft. Campbell Campus Open House and Student Appreciation Day
  - a. On October 29, 2014, information about services offered by the VSOC program was disseminated. The information included, but was not limited to: Chapter 36 Educational/Vocational Counseling, the Chapter 31 program, VSOC mentoring and tutoring services, VA Benefits Handbooks, VA Vet Center and Women's Health Services brochures, and other Veteran related collateral materials. Follow up appointments were scheduled For Veterans, Active Duty Military, and eligible Dependents requesting additional information on the VSOC program.
- 9. Austin Peay State University (APSU) Career Services and VSOC Employment Assistance Event
  - a. On November 5, 2014, direct employment assistance was provided to upcoming graduating seniors. VSOC provided specific services geared toward graduating Veterans, including transferable skills analysis for resumes, information on utilizing USA jobs, and information regarding utilizing Veterans Preference, Special Hiring Authority. Information was also provided regarding specific application and interviewing techniques and strategies unique to Veterans. Information and handouts on the eBenefits Employment Center were also provided. Follow up appointments were scheduled for Veterans requesting additional employment assistance through VSOC.

10. Veteran's Day Parade – Nashville, Tennessee
  - a. On November 11, 2014, approximately 34 employees from the Nashville Regional Office participated in the Nashville Veteran's Day Parade. The parade has been held for over 60 years and always takes place at 11:00 a.m. on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month. The parade is organized by the Davidson Veterans Coordinating Council.
11. Tennessee Department of Labor (DOL) Clarksville Career Center Veterans Services Awareness Event
  - a. On November 14, 2014, the Vocational Rehabilitation VetSuccess on Campus Counselor attended this event. The purpose of the event was to make Veterans aware of the Tennessee DOL Career Center services, VetSuccess On Campus program, as well as other agencies in the Clarksville area who provide services to Veterans.
12. VBA/VHA Town Hall Meeting – Memphis, Tennessee
  - a. On November 17, 2014, Director Edna MacDonald and four staff members traveled to Memphis, Tennessee to join the Memphis VA medical center in conducting a joint Town Hall Meeting. There were approximately 130 people in attendance and approximately 20 questions/comments taken from the audience. The Nashville Regional Office staff assisted 30 Veterans with claims related questions and issues.
13. Visit from VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson
  - a. On November 18 & 19, 2014, Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson visited the TVHS campuses in Murfreesboro and Nashville, as well as the VA Nashville Regional Office. He met with stakeholders, held a press conference, and met with staff from both TVHS and the Nashville Regional Office.